



BELLE HAVEN MARINA

PUBLIC SCOPING

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

Volume I

March 2001

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning a planning process regarding public access to the river from the South end of the Parkway. Belle Haven Marina, Inc. is the current concessioner who oversees the boat ramp, dry and wet storage facilities, a sailing school and the rental of canoes, kayaks, and sailboats. The initial concession contract between George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and Belle Haven Marina, Inc. expired in 1992 and the marina continues to operate under a contract extension. The latest extension expires on December 31, 2001 and by law can not be renewed (National Park Service Concessions Management and Improvement Act of 1998, 16 USC 5952 (11)(A)). As part of this planning process GWMP is considering alternative locations and different combinations of visitor services.

Since the early 1950s, the NPS allowed marina services on the three-acre parcel of waterfront. In 1959, the NPS was able to acquire Dyke Marsh, one of the largest naturally occurring freshwater tidal marshes in the National Park System. Public Law 86-41 authorized the NPS acquisition of Dyke Marsh in exchange for providing dredging rights to the Smoot, Sand and Gravel Corporation, on the NPS land surrounding the marina. Cited as an area of "irreplaceable wet lands," this law required that, "preservation [of] wet land wildlife habitat shall be paramount." In considering the future of the peninsula, the NPS is seeking to provide necessary and appropriate visitor services while minimizing the impacts to Dyke Marsh.

Two public scoping Open Houses will be held at Potowmack Landing Restaurant in Alexandria on May 1st and 2nd. From 7 to 9 PM, on those two evenings the public can view aerial photographs identifying the locations of the alternatives and participate in dialogue with park staff. The alternatives are described in this newsletter so those who are unable to attend will have all the information about alternatives being considered. We welcome your participation in this process. Please submit your comments on the enclosed form by June 4, 2001.

Sincerely,

Audrey F. Calhoun
Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What prevents Belle Haven Marina from operating as it is now?

- Belle Haven Marina, Inc. will reach the three-year time limit on contract extensions on December 31, 2001 and by law can not continue concessions operations under the current contract after this date.
- Inadequate traffic circulation, deteriorating utility systems, and severe bulkhead and shoreline erosion pose an increasing concern for visitor safety.
- A 1995 Feasibility Analysis concluded it is financially infeasible for any potential concessioner to redevelop Belle Haven without the NPS contributing at least \$1.5 million toward rehabilitation.
- GWMP sought a partnership with Fairfax County Park Authority to cover the cost of repairs. The Park Authority concluded the marina rehabilitation was not viable.

Can GWMP write a new concession contract for marina operations?

Issues related to public safety, appropriate river access, resource protection, and financial feasibility need to be decided through a planning process. This public scoping is the first step in involving the public in making a decision on the marina operation.

Will there be other opportunities for public involvement?

In addition to the open houses, an Environmental Assessment will be drafted and other public meetings held to gather public comments. Interested citizens can also add their names and addresses to our mailing list.

How do I provide the NPS with my comments?

Write your concerns on the enclosed comment form and mail it or you can e-mail your response by visiting the GWMP web site: www.nps.gov/gwmp.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A – No Action

The new concession law does not allow for any additional contract extensions for Belle Haven Marina, Inc. Under the No Action Alternative no new concession contract would be implemented. Concession-related visitor services would cease. Visitor services no longer available would include wet and dry storage, boat rental, sailing classes, and ramp access to the river.

Alternative B – Belle Haven Interpretive and Natural Area

This alternative would provide the public areas for shoreline fishing and self-guided interpretive study. A car top launch area would serve non-motorized boats, canoes, kayaks and sailboats. Removal of the existing pilings, docks, and moorings would be required as well as extensive shoreline stabilization, replanting, and reseeding. Parking would be limited to the spaces existing in Belle Haven picnic area and the entrance to Dyke Marsh.

Alternative C – Belle Haven Boat Ramp

In both C Alternatives the marina facility would be removed and there would be approximately 15 parking spaces for vehicles. A concessioner would be providing a sailing school and canoe and kayak rentals. After shoreline stabilization a boat ramp would be available.

- **Alternative C1 – Non Motorized**
Belle Haven would have a one-lane boat ramp limiting access to kayaks, canoes, rowboats, and sailboat launching.
- **Alternative C2 – Motorized and Non motorized**
Belle Haven would have a two-lane boat ramp for motor boats as well as non-motorized boats.

Alternative D – Non-motorized Boat Ramp at Belle Haven Marina, Motorized Boat Ramp at North End of Belle Haven Picnic Area

This alternative would provide a single lane boat ramp for non-motorized boats and a concession operated sailing school and canoe/kayak rental operation at the existing marina location. The existing boat ramp would be improved to eliminate environmental and safety hazards. The existing marinas (wet & dry slips) including paved areas would be removed. After shoreline stabilization, the peninsula would become an open space with picnic tables and areas for shoreline fishing.

This alternative would also develop a two lane motorized boat ramp at the north end of the Belle Haven Picnic area. The northernmost parking area would be converted from car parking to boat trailer parking with 20 pull through stalls for vehicles pulling trailers. Forty-five new car-parking spaces would be provided in the picnic area to offset some of the ninety-two spaces lost converting the car parking area to trailer parking. There would be a total net loss of 47 car-parking spaces in the picnic area. Both ramps would be free for public use.

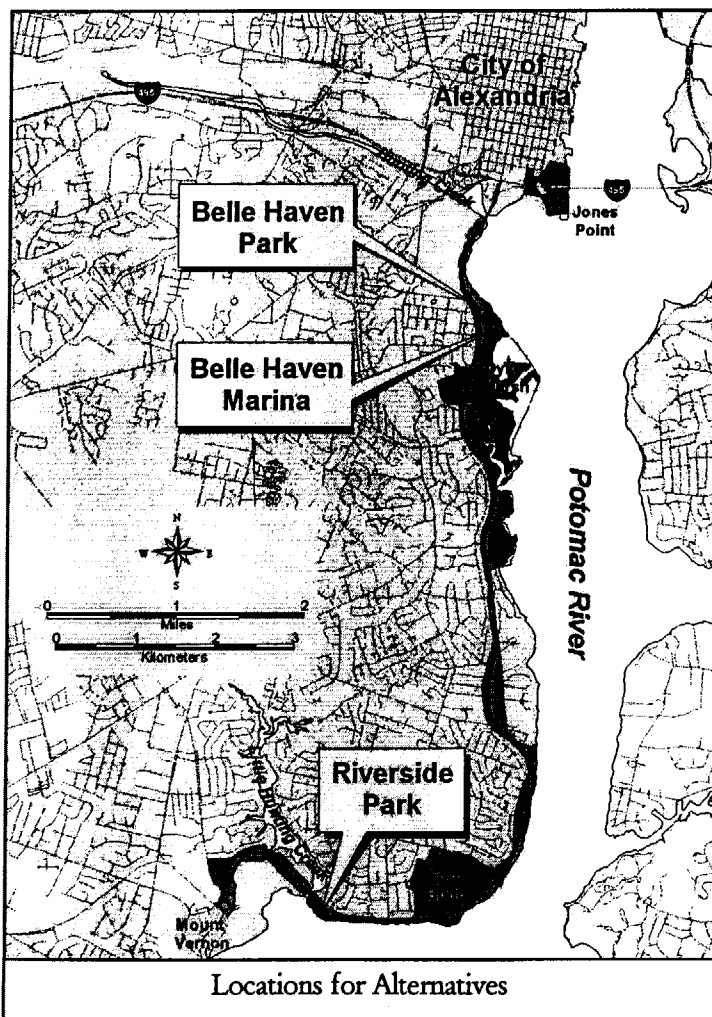
Alternative E – Belle Haven Marina

In both E Alternatives the boat ramp would be expanded to provide two lanes of ramp traffic. The dry storage area would be eliminated and the shoreline stabilized to provide for additional car and trailer parking for the marina. A concession contract would be sought to provide a sailing school, canoe and kayak rental, and management of marina wet slip rentals. Visitors would enjoy canoeing, kayaking, sailing, motor boating and wet boat storage.

- **Alternative E1 – Expanded marina**
Docks would be improved to provide for 91 wet storage slips. Parking would be expanded to provide for 45 vehicles within the marina area.
- **Alternative E2 – Reduced size marina**
Docks would be replaced with new floating docks providing wet storage slips for 69 boats. There would be parking for 35 vehicles within the marina area.

Common to All Alternatives

Dry slip storage aggravates the poor circulation and parking problems. It is eliminated from the alternatives in order to increase parking and provide safer traffic circulation. Any construction improvements would comply with Americans With Disabilities Act providing accessible facilities.



Alternative No Longer Considered

Alternative F – Non-motorized Boat Ramp at Belle Haven Marina, Motorized Boat Ramp at Riverside Park

This alternative would provide a single lane boat ramp for non-motorized boats and a concession operated sailing school and canoe/kayak rental operation at the existing marina location. The existing boat ramp would be improved to eliminate environmental and safety hazards. Existing wet & dry slips, including paved areas, would be removed. The peninsula would become an open space with areas for shoreline fishing.

This alternative would also develop a two lane motorized boat ramp at Riverside Park. A section of the existing parking lot would be converted to twelve head-in boat trailer parking spaces and trailer maneuvering space. A total of 39 car-parking spaces would be lost.

Identified during the internal scoping process on January 4, 2001, this alternative was removed from consideration due to the following reasons:

- The current uses of Riverside Park include picnicking, fishing, and an access point to the Mount Vernon Trail. The area is relatively small in size – approximately 6 acres. The existing uses are not compatible with a motorized boat ramp in an area of this size.
- There are currently 67 car-parking spaces. Providing a two lane boat ramp at this location would require enlarging the existing parking area to provide twelve head-in (back-out) parking spaces for vehicles with trailers. These parking stalls would eliminate 18 car-parking spaces. The ramp and turn-around space would eliminate 21 additional car-parking spaces. If a ramp were constructed at Riverside Park there would be 28 car-parking spaces and 12 parking spaces for trailers. Twelve trailer parking spaces are not adequate and the reduction of car parking from 67 to 28 is not acceptable.
- The elevation change from the river to the existing parking area is approximately 12 feet. The difference would require significant earthwork that would dramatically change the river's edge. This change would be considered an impairment to the viewshed of the river and the river embankment at this location.

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

* Indicates this activity will be available at a location other than the Belle Haven peninsula.

Alternative	A	B	C1	C2	D	E1	E2	F
Two lane, motorized ramp	No	No	No	Yes	Yes *	Yes	Yes	Yes *
One lane non-motorized ramp	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Wet slip spaces	None	None	None	None	None	91	69	None
Vehicle parking spaces	None	None	15	15	27	45	35	27
Trailer parking spaces	None	None	None	None	20 *	None	None	12 *
Concession Services								
Marina	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Sailing School	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canoe and kayak rental	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visitor Use								
Canoeing	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kayaking	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sailing	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Motor Boating	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes *	Yes	Yes	Yes *
Shoreline fishing	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Interpretive Area	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Alternative	A	B	C1	C2	D	E1	E2	F

See the narrative version of the alternatives on page 2 for more details.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process will focus on developing alternatives for river access and visitor services on the South end of the Parkway. In working through the planning process the GMWP will be following the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and agency guidance in the NPS Director's Order 12, signed January 8, 2001. The timeline below outlines the major activities during this process. After fully considering all the public comments, GWMP superintendent will make the final decision as to the type of facility that would best serve the public and protect the park resources.

Projected Planning Timeline

Public Scoping Open House	Spring 2001
Environmental Assessment	Summer 2001
Public Meetings	Summer 2001
Final Decision Document	Fall 2001

United States Department of Interior
National Park Service
George Washington Memorial Parkway
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED